



INSIDE INDIA

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USAID/India Employees Recognized with Awards

Sheena Chhabra is USAID FSN of the year

Ms. Sheena Chhabra, Health Systems Division Chief for USAID/India's Health Office, traveled to Washington, DC to receive the FSN of the Year award at an Agency ceremony on December 17, 2008. Ms. Chhabra was recognized for her exemplary leadership and technical skills and her contribution to improved relations with the Government of India (GOI), particularly her outstanding work on India's third National Family Health Survey (NFHS).



USAID Administrator Henrietta H. Fore presents Sheena Chhabra with FSN of the year award in Washington, D.C. *Photo: USAID*

One of the largest health surveys conducted in the world, the NFHS provides state and national information for India on fertility, infant and child mortality, family planning, maternal and child health, reproductive health, nutrition, anemia, utilization and quality of health services, and gender. For the NFHS, 18 research organizations conducted interviews with more than 230,000 women and men and tested blood for HIV and anemia. With her creativity, persistence, excellent customer service, and technical savvy, Ms. Chhabra spearheaded and led the design, implementation, and dissemination of this survey, which is now changing the face of programs and policies in India. She was instrumental in getting new and innovative components added to NFHS, such as the first ever population-based HIV estimates for India, a men's questionnaire, and gender issues, including gender violence.

Under Ms. Chhabra's leadership, the NFHS is an excellent global example of collaboration amongst a variety of partners for mutual goals. The Government of India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Britain's Department for International Development, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, UNICEF, and UNFPA contributed a total of approximately \$8 million toward the costs and worked jointly with USAID to support the survey. Lessons learned will lead to increased sustainability of the survey and enhance its methodology as USAID prepares to assist the GOI with the fourth NFHS, planned for 2011.

National Neonatology Forum of India Honors USAID Child Health Specialist Dr. Rajiv Tandon



Dr. Tandon with children in Agra. Photo: Sukhminder Dosanjh

The National Neonatology Forum of India (NNF) recently awarded an Honorary Fellowship to USAID pediatrician and child health specialist, Dr. Rajiv Tandon. Dr. Tandon, Chief, Maternal and Child Health, Nutrition and Urban Health Division, USAID/India received the award for his contribution to developing the Government of India's National Child Health Policy. India's infant mortality rate is among the highest in the world, with newborn deaths accounting for a significant portion of that rate. Dr. Tandon was particularly instrumental in ensuring an increased focus on newborn care in the policy

The NNF is a professional body of approximately 5,000 members in 18 state chapters across the country dedicated to the issue of newborn health. The fellowship was presented to Dr. Tandon by Health and Family Welfare Minister, Dr. Surjya Kant Mishra and Finance Minister Dr. Asim Das Gupta, Government of West Bengal at the 28th INN Convention in Kolkata.

Program Profile

Addressing a key factor in adolescent girls' health

With assistance from USAID, in early December the Government of Uttar Pradesh launched the innovative Saloni (which in Hindi means "a pleasant adolescent girl") Swasth Kishori Yojna campaign to address the widespread problem of acute anemia in adolescent married and unmarried girls. The very high prevalence of anemia in India results in many adverse outcomes, including poor mental and physical health, low productivity and, in women, poor pregnancy outcomes and maternal death. The period of adolescence, when girls are still growing and developing, is seen as a particularly good time to intervene to prevent future health problems.

In the first phase of this project, approximately 2.5 million 10-19 year old adolescent girls across 6,000 villages will be provided with weekly iron and folic acid (IFA) tablets and bi-annual deworming, key interventions for combating anemia. Both girls who are attending school and those who are not will be targeted in the campaign.

Although a team of doctors will visit the selected schools twice a year and administer the deworming medications, a team of trained teachers will administer the weekly IFA tablets. Supplementing the medical interventions, the trained teachers will also hold monthly meetings at the schools to discuss a range of issues critical to improving girls' health, hygiene, and nutrition. Other important topics like detecting anemia, deciding the appropriate age for marriage (with the goal to reduce the large numbers who marry before the legal age of 18 years), delaying the first pregnancy, and developing negotiating skills will also be covered to help empower the girls to take better care of themselves for a healthier future. For adolescent girls who are not attending school, trained female community health activists will provide the same health services and arrange for monthly meetings covering the same topics as the school-based programs.